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Security Council

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Letter dated 18 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you herewith a concept note for the Security Council open debate, to be held on 30 November 2011, on implementation of the measures set out in the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507) (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) José Filipe **Moraes Cabral**
Ambassador

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Annex to the letter dated 18 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on working methods

30 November 2011

1. Significant efforts have been made throughout the last two decades to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the Security Council. Since 1993,[1] when concern was raised over the increasing trend of the Security Council to close itself in informal consultations for decision-making,[2] until 2006, when a significant review of the practice of its working methods was undertaken, many positive developments can be identified. In particular, in the aftermath of the 2005 World Summit, whose outcome document recommended that the Security Council continue "to adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work",[3] the Security Council undertook a concerted effort to review its working methods. To that end, it revitalized its Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions and, in order to achieve greater focus and continuity, abandoned the practice of rotating the chairmanship each month from presidency to presidency and instead appointing a single chairman for the year. The results of this work were captured in a July 2006 note by the President of the Council (S/2006/507).

The Working Group has continued to address this matter in the following years. Currently, it has been working under the chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina (following Japan in 2006, the Working Group was chaired by Slovakia, Panama and in 2009 and 2010 again by Japan). Open debates organized by the Council[4] have afforded the participation of the wider United Nations membership in the Council's deliberations about its working methods.

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[1] See brief history in Security Council Report Inc., Special Research Report 2007, No. 3 (18 October 2007) (www.securitycouncilreport.org), "The process of reform of the working methods really began in 1993 ... Several initiatives were launched reflecting concern by some Council members about the need to make the body more transparent and accountable, as well as more efficient and capable of handling various crises at once". In 1994, the Security Council organized, for the first time, an open debate on its methods of work. See also, for the balance of the practice on Security Council methods of work, the concept paper prepared by Belgium for the 2008 open debate of the Security Council (S/2008/528, annex) and the concept paper prepared by Japan for the open debate of 2010 (S/2010/165, annex). See Security Council Report Inc., Special Research Report 2010 (30 March 2010), for a thorough review of all the latest developments in the Security Council concerning its methods of work.

[2] Security Council Report Inc., Special Research Report 2007, No. 3 (18 October 2007), "In order to accommodate this increased workload, and to cope with continuous discussion on often very sensitive issues" ... the Council turned more and more to the practice of convening the vast majority of its meetings in closed consultations of the whole.

[3] General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 154.

[4] The first open debate on working methods took place in 1994. Subsequent to the adoption of the note by the President (S/2006/507) and following the Arria-formula meeting in 2007 (Slovakia initiative), the Security Council organized an open debate in August 2008 (under the Belgian Presidency) focused on the implementation of the 2006 note. In 2010, during its Presidency of the Council, Japan organized the third open debate, on 22 April.

Outside the Security Council, the working methods have continued to be discussed in the General Assembly, mainly in the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform[5] and the ongoing rounds of intergovernmental negotiations on this matter. Several proposals were put forward and debated in these settings, including by groups of States or regional organizations, many of them referenced in the set of proposals submitted the so-called "small five group" (S5) (Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland).

2. The Security Council open debate that is scheduled to take place in November, under the Portuguese Presidency, will be the fourth open debate of the Council on this issue. It will build on the previous one, in April 2010, a Japanese initiative, which preceded the adoption, on 26 July 2010, of a note reviewing all previous notes on Council working methods (S/2010/507). Indeed, the note, which contains 13 areas relating to Council practices, updated, further developed and expanded the previous note of 2006.[6] The upcoming open debate will be an opportunity for the Council, with the participation of interested delegations from the wider membership, to look at the implementation of the note and identify positive trends and successful practices to increase efficiency and transparency. It could also identify possible shortcomings and areas in need of adjustments.

3. As in the last two debates, transparency, interaction with non-members and Council efficiency continue to be the principal themes suggested for discussion, with the aim of identifying ways of improving in all these aspects.

Interventions should aim at a constructive debate on the recent practice of the Security Council, including on the extent to which the above-mentioned note (S/2010/507) has been implemented and how the Council is making progress in this area. Suggestions regarding practical measures aiming at enhancing transparency, efficiency and Council interaction with United Nations members at large that could make a difference in the day-to-day business of the Security Council would be particularly helpful.

The debate could be oriented around different questions concerning these three areas, including the following:

- The importance of continuing and strengthening the trend of meeting more often in public, including through holding public briefings and debates, without prejudice to the usefulness of consultations of the whole in preparing Council decisions.

- Useful ways to increase efficiency in open debates (such as, foreseeing sufficient time for the preparation of useful inputs by Member States; devising practical ways of reducing meeting time and shortening interventions, while promoting wider participation in public meeting; ensuring that the outcome

[5] Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

[6] The note, among other things, included a new section on "Security Council missions". The note added that, as a general rule, the purpose of initial remarks or ad hoc briefings delivered by members of the Secretariat was to supplement and update written reports of the Secretary-General. Some aspects of the seizure list were clarified further, regular communication with the Peacebuilding Commission was underlined and guidelines to the annual report were included as well.

documents of open debates reflect relevant inputs from all participants; promoting more focused contributions through the use of concept papers and indicative questions to be addressed).

- Practices to enhance interaction of the Security Council with actors such as concerned States or parties and regional and subregional organizations, through more frequent use of Arria-formula meetings as an informal, practical and useful way of Council interaction with individuals and other entities, or the use of informal interactive dialogues,[7] as appropriate.
- Making the Council's interaction with troop-contributing countries more substantive, perhaps through the use of concept notes or indicative questions to be addressed.
- Enhancing the role of the Military Staff Committee.
- Improving the Council's interaction with the chairpersons of the Peacebuilding Commission and its country-specific configurations.
- Enhancing the role of the Presidents of the Council in the interaction with the wider membership, including through monthly briefings and informal wrap-up sessions at the end of each Presidency.
- Enhancing the interaction of the Presidents of the Council with other relevant United Nations bodies.
- Ensuring more informative annual reporting of the Security Council to the General Assembly by encouraging interactive consultations with wider membership before its conclusion and submission to the General Assembly and devising ways to ensure more substantive and analytical information on situations under the Council's consideration and on the work of the subsidiary bodies.
- Importance of "monthly assessments" by the Presidents on the work of the Council.[8]
- Ways to increase transparency, interaction and efficiency also in subsidiary organs work, in particular sanction committees, in furtherance of the recommendations of its former Informal Working Group on General Issues of Sanctions.[9]

[7] Recently the Council has agreed to more innovative meeting "formats", such as the "informal interactive dialogue" (see Security Council Report Inc., Special Research Report No. 1 (30 March 2010), sect. 5.2).

[8] See recent developments in S/2010/507 on the annual report to the General Assembly.

[9] Established in 2000 (S/2000/319), initially chaired by Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, the working group developed a thorough review of sanctions issues. At the end of 2006, the working group, chaired by Greece, submitted a comprehensive report (S/2006/997) on the subject, with focus on the following aspects: sanctions design, implementation, evaluation and follow-up; monitoring and enforcement; committees working methods; methodological standards on reports of sanctions monitoring mechanisms and criteria and best practices for a standard format for reports of sanctions monitoring mechanisms. The Council, by its resolution 1732 (2006) took "note with interest of the best practices and methods contained in the WG's report" and requested its subsidiary bodies to "take note as well", having considered thus fulfilled the mandate of the Working Group.